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Sociology

Saint Mary's College of California

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SOCIOLOGY

In the Sociology Department you'll learn to better understand the sometimes confusing nature of human social life. How is social life possible? What do patterns of social life tell us about the world? What is the relationship of the individual to the social order?

In the words of sociologist C. Wright Mills, sociology requires that we exercise our "sociological imagination." That is, we must understand how the issues in the lives of individuals are also the issues of the larger society. We can't understand the individual without understanding society and we can't understand society without understanding the individual. This implies that sociology is deeply personal. We seek to understand society, but in doing so we learn much about ourselves.

Sociology addresses the most pressing social issues in contemporary society: racial and ethnic tensions, gender inequality, poverty, health and illness, social movements, crime and deviance, educational inequality, immigration, globalization and problems in urban environments, just to name a few. Sociologists study everything from the social dynamics of two people in conversation to the social dynamics of political revolutions.

Sociology provides students with a theoretical framework with which to help make sense of an increasingly complex world and the place of the individual within that world. Sociology also provides students with specific methodological tools to investigate the social world and to collect and analyze data about the world we live in.

The sociology major develops research skills, analytical skills and communication skills that are well-suited to students interested in careers in teaching, public and mental health, law, counseling, social work, the criminal justice system, public policy, marketing, journalism and the non-profit sector.

FACULTY

John Ely, Ph.D., *Associate Professor, Chair*
Zeynep Atalay, Ph.D., *Assistant Professor*
Robert Bulman, Ph.D., *Professor*
Cynthia Ganote, Ph.D., *Associate Professor*
Phylis Martinelli, Ph.D., *Professor*
Ynez Wilson Hirst, Ph.D., *Adjunct Associate Professor*

LEARNING OUTCOMES

When students have completed the sociology program they will be able to:

- **UNDERSTAND** sociological theory and methods and be able to apply theoretical explanations to empirical examples.
- **RESEARCH** and analyze a sociological topic using the appropriate library resources.
- **WRITE** research papers with a clear thesis statement, sufficient support for that thesis, and in accordance with the standards of the American Sociological Association.
- **EXERCISE** their sociological imagination in order to reflect upon questions of personal and social responsibility in a complex and changing society.
- **APPLY** sociological knowledge as they engage with the community beyond the academy.
- **EMPLOY** critical reading, thinking, and writing skills as they research, analyze, and report on a social issue in a way that incorporates what they have learned on a topic of their own choosing.

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

The sociology major is composed of 13 lower- and upper-division courses.

LOWER DIVISION

Sociology 2 Introduction to Sociology

Sociology 4 Social Problems

Mathematics 4 Introduction to Probability and Statistics

UPPER DIVISION

Sociology 101 The Sociological Imagination

Sociology 130 Sociological Theory

Sociology 132 Sociological Research Methods

Seven additional upper-division courses.

MINOR REQUIREMENTS

SOCIOLOGY

The minor in sociology requires two lower-division courses (**Sociology 2 Introduction to Sociology** and **Sociology 4 Social Problems**) and four upper-division sociology electives.

PREREQUISITE GRADE

A minimum acceptable grade of C- is required for coursework to count toward a minor or the major.

C O U R S E S

LOWER DIVISION

2 Introduction to Sociology

Sociological theory, methods and the sociological perspective are studied. This perspective enables students to see how the self, human behavior and attitudes are shaped by social structures and institutions, e.g., social class, popular culture and the family. The social world is re-examined (social rules, deviance, gender, inequality, the economy, etc.). *This course satisfies the Social, Historical, and Cultural Understanding requirement and the American Diversity requirement of the Core Curriculum.*

4 Social Problems

An overview of the causes, characteristics and responses to social problems in the United States. Topics such as crime, substance abuse, racism, ageism and family instability are studied through the sociological framework. *This course satisfies the Social, Historical, and Cultural Understanding requirement; the American Diversity requirement; and the Common Good requirement of the Core Curriculum.*

UPPER DIVISION

All upper-division courses have a prerequisite of **Sociology 2**, or **Sociology 4** or the consent of the instructor.

101 The Sociological Imagination

This course will reinforce and expand upon many of the concepts you have been introduced to in Introduction to Sociology and Social Problems. In this course we will explore the basic theoretical perspectives within sociology, the use of theory in sociological research, the logic of sociological research and an introduction to a variety of methodological approaches used by sociologists. This course will provide students with a solid base of knowledge which will serve them well in other upper division sociology courses—the Sociological Theory and Sociological Research Methods courses in particular. It is suggested that students have sophomore standing to take this course. *This course satisfies the Social, Historical, and Cultural Understanding requirement and the Writing in the Disciplines requirement of the Core Curriculum.*

111 Sociology of Families

Families are one of our most basic social institutions. They provide the primary social and physical contexts within which we become fully human. This course begins by exploring the idea of “the traditional family” and continues by examining historical trends and empirical data about American family life over the past century; including divorce patterns, fertility rates, women entering the workforce, and marriage. The class focuses on diversity and change, particularly the ways that social trends and social categories influence family structures.

112 Race and Ethnicity

This course presents sociology’s key concepts and theories in the study of race and ethnicity. Focusing primarily on the U.S., this course looks at the cultural and social constructions of race and ethnicity.

114 Urban Studies

Traces the development of modern communities, ranging from suburbs to the megalopolis. Studies the benefits and problems of contemporary urban life and projects future trends based on sociological models.

115 Wealth and Poverty

This course offers an in-depth study of wealth, poverty, and the economic system in which they are grounded in the United States. Toward this end, students will apply various theoretical frameworks on economic inequality to current social problems in order to evaluate each framework’s explanatory power. Further, students will critique past and current programs for lessening the impacts of poverty and use this knowledge to imagine and critique possible future policies.

116 New Immigrants and Refugees

Looks at the attitudinal and legal reactions to immigrants and refugees in the United States in this century. Emphasis is placed on the new Americans, why they are coming, and how they differ from earlier migrants. Special attention is given to the impact of new immigrant groups in California.

118 Health and Illness

Presents social and cultural factors influencing health and illness. Looks at the roles of health care professionals, patients and medical settings in our society. Discusses the relationships between the current health care system and the political and economic system.

120 Social Movements

Each course focuses on one or more social movements, which are collective actions aimed at social change. The course addresses the social, political, cultural and economic factors that bring about social movements and determine their success or failure.

122 Education and Society

This course examines the many roles that schools play in society. In particular, we examine the ways in which schooling either reproduces social inequalities or provides resources for upward social mobility. We examine the ways schools are organized, the connection between schools and other institutions such as families and workplaces, and the ways race, class, and gender are experienced in the classroom.

Curriculum Sociology

123 Ethnic Groups in the United States

Each course in this series looks at one of the following American ethnic groups: Latinos, Asian Americans, African Americans. While emphasizing the contemporary period, each course focuses on the social, cultural and historical experiences of each group. Areas covered are assimilation and resistance, distribution in the social and power structure, family systems and cultural values, labor and migration, role of religion, status of women, etc. May be repeated for credit as content varies.

124 Justice and Community

Addresses the use of state power in the carrying out of crime control, retribution and the overall protection of the community. The course has three main parts: a theoretical look at how we have ended up with the justice system that we have today; the practice of justice through field studies on police, courts and prisons; and an in-depth investigation into an area of criminal justice of current relevance (such as “three strikes,” the expansion of prisons, or race and justice).

125 Gender and Society

While sex differences are biological, gender encompasses the traits that society assigns to and inculcates in males and females. This course studies the latter: the interplay between gender and society. It takes an inclusive perspective, with a focus on men and women in different cultural contexts defined by ethnic group membership, sexuality and socioeconomic status.

126 Field Experience

Opportunity for students to gain hands-on experience conducting sociological analysis in the field. Supervised work in community agencies, government bureaus, museums and political or industrial organizations.

128 Crime and Delinquency

The course addresses different theoretical and sociological approaches to crime, follows changes in these approaches over time and looks at how these changes reflect broader shifts in our comprehension of human nature and behavior. Students gain insights not only to changes in the understanding of crime but also to changes in our fundamental view of human behavior.

130 Sociological Theory

Analysis of the works of major theorists who have influenced sociology. Emphasis on explaining what is essential about particular theoretical frameworks, how they can be used and why they should be studied. Students must have completed **Sociology 2 Introduction to Sociology** and **Sociology 101 The Sociological Imagination**. It is suggested that students have junior standing to take this course.

132 Sociological Research Methods

This course will teach you the logic of social science research, teach you some specific methodological tools used by sociologists, and have you use these tools to collect data to answer a sociological research question. Students must have completed **Sociology 2 Introduction to Sociology**, and **Sociology 101 The Sociological Imagination**. It is suggested that this course be taken in the last semester of the junior year.

133 Senior Thesis

Continuation of Research Methods course where honor students undertake individual research, culminating in the senior project. This should be taken in the senior year. *A faculty sponsor is required.*

135 Special Topics

Special topics in sociology include such issues as international race relations, criminology and emotion, sociology of disaster, sociology of film and other topics. May be repeated for credit as content varies.

140 Senior Research Seminar

In this course you will take all that you have learned in sociology and weave it into an original research project of your own choosing. Using what you have learned of sociological methods you will design and conduct a research project. You will analyze the data and use sociological theory to explain it. You will also conduct a literature review in the relevant content area and integrate all of this in the final paper. The final paper will be written in the format of a sociological journal article.

195 Special Study Internship

This course is usually taken by an upper-division student who wishes to complete his/her education with related work experience and is maintaining at least a C average. In addition to work experience (6–8 hours per week), outside research and a term project are usually required. *Sponsorship by a sociology faculty member and approval of the department chair is required.*

197 Independent Study

This course entails independent study or research for students whose needs are not met by courses available in the regular offerings of the department. The course usually requires the writing of a term project. *Sponsorship by a sociology faculty member and approval of the department chair is required.*

199 Special Study – Honors

This course is only available to upper-division majors with a B average or higher and entails independent study or research under the supervision of a sociology faculty member. *Approval of the department chair is required.*